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## Some notes about the Dutch diminutive suffix<sup>\*</sup>

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**Abstract:** This paper proposes an alternative view on the allomorphy of the Dutch diminutive suffix –je (with allomorphs: –je, –kje, –pje, –tje, and –etje), an allomorphy allegedly determined phonologically. The major claim is that the whole of the allomorphy is not due to synchronic phonological processes.

Moreover, the phonological process which does synchronically underlie the allomorphy is the strengthening of a palatal glide /j/. In particular, the –tje and –etje allomorphs do not derive from a /t/ through palatalization, but from a simple palatal glide /j/ which is strengthened in certain environments and is realized as [c]. Furthermore, allomorphs with epenthetic stops [p k] are not due to phonological alternation, but rather they may be argued to be lexicalized (relic) forms in fact. To account for the whole of the allomorphy, quite a number of restrictions should be postulated which would be operative on the diminutive only – which points to morphological rather than phonological conditioning.

### 0 Introduction

The paper proposes an alternative view on the allomorphy of the Dutch diminutive suffix –je (with allomorphs: –je, –kje, –pje, –tje, and –etje), an allomorphy allegedly determined by the phonology. The major claim to be defended is that the whole of the allomorphy is not due to synchronic phonological processes. There are two sides to this claim, however: (1) some of the allomorphy is not phonological; (2) the underlying form of the active phonological alternation is not the allomorph which is usually assumed to underlie the allomorphy. In addition, the phonological theoretical importance of certain allomorphs will be emphasized in the paper.

Specifically, the various alleged place assimilations of the epenthetic stop consonants need not be accounted for phonologically; therefore, the allomorphs with epenthetic stops [p k] are argued to be lexicalized (relic) forms in fact rather than productive (active) derivation. There seems to be some independent evidence that these forms are not derived on-line. Moreover, the only phonological process which does synchronically underlie the allomorphy is an alternation between a simple and a strengthened variant of the palatal glide /j/: [j] versus [c] ([tʃ]). In particular, the –tje and –etje allomorphs do not derive from a /t/ through palatalization, but quite the contrary, from a simple palatal glide /j/ which is *strengthened* in

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certain environments and is realized as [c] or [tj]. The „underlying” form is then /-je/ rather than /-tje/ (unlike Booij 1995, but somewhat similarly to Lahiri–Evers 1991). The problem is simply that [je] does not surface intervocalically, which is in fact motivated by an independent synchronic restriction in the system anyway.

The major problem in connection with the Dutch diminutive allomorphy, as Jeroen van de Weijer (2002:199) points out in his preliminary remarks, has been that to account for the whole of the allomorphy, quite a number of restrictions need to be postulated which would be operative only on the diminutive suffix, but nowhere else in the system – which points to a morphological rather than phonological conditioning. Such distributions are a challenge to any strict framework, especially constraint-based theories like Optimality Theory as well as other non-linear theories like Government Phonology. In this paper an implicit government phonological perspective is assumed, although this will not figure prominently this time since the focus is more on what merits and defects earlier treatments have.

The paper first offers a descriptive account of the primary data based on the traditional descriptive ANS approach (Section 1). Sections 2 and 3 recapitulate what earlier phonological work had to say about the phonological processes involved. Common to these approaches is the assumption that the allomorphy is governed by purely phonological restrictions (Section 4). Section 5 presents the alternative view and makes an attempt to motivate the claim that /j/ underlies the allomorphy. The paper finishes with a summary and references.

## **1 The basic distribution of the allomorphs**

Although the distribution of the allomorphs of the diminutive suffix has become well-established in Dutch phonological literature, the treatment of the alternants varies considerably from author to author, mainly due to the different theoretical approaches authors take. This paper is no exception either. But let us consider the facts first of all.

To the best of my knowledge, the most comprehensive summary of the distribution is found in the descriptive grammar of Dutch, the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* (the General Grammar of Dutch; hence *ANS*). Below is the set of data taken from the descriptive ANS tradition with some customization (eg, with accents indicating stress all through, not necessarily present in the orthography of Dutch):

(1)

-kje	after the unstressed suffix -ing:	soldéring – soldérinkje
-pje	after schwa + m: after VV +m: after l, r + m:	bézem – bézempje bóom – bóompje, kostúum – kostúumpje film – filmpje, árm – ármpje
-tje	after VV + n, l, r: after V + rn: after unstressed V + n, l, r: after word-final schwa:  after VV#:	bóon – bóontje, úur – úurtje, páal – páaltje kérn – kérntje wágen – wágentje, lépel – lépeltje anekdóte [-ə] – anekdót[ə]tje, serenáde – serenád[ə]tje, file – fil[ə]tje lá [la:] – láatje, zée – zéetje, bóei – bóeitje, café – caféetje, dinér – dinéetje
-etje	after stressed V + m, n, ng, l, r:	kám – kámmetje, gúm – gúmmetje, pén – pénnetje, díng – díngetje, lól – lólletje, ról – rólletje
-je	after stressed V(V) + p, t, k, f, s, x:	áap – áapje, kóop – kóopje, kát – kátje, mánd – mán[t]je, kúif – kúifje, kík – kíjkje, blík – blíkje

Some notes are in order at this point. First of all, some of the formulations of the environments, for instance „after unstressed vowel” for „after schwa”, might seem too vague, but the examples make the point clear. Secondly, I would not include *boei – boeitje* in the VV# set since it can be analysed as VV+glide: [bu:j]. I think it belongs, therefore, to VV+sonorant: *boon, uur, paal*, etc – but this is not the descriptive tradition in Dutch linguistics. (It is not an issue here of course since it would take the same suffix either way.) Lastly, it might be interesting to know whether a word-final schwa in *anecdote*-type words can be preceded by a non-coronal. There is also a very interesting feature of the ANS approach, which is often neglected in more theoretical approaches. The ANS listing makes reference to stress facts. As will be apparent, stress influences some of the allomorphy.

Based on the above data then a number of general observations can be drawn. First of all, there are certain homorganicity effects. After sonorants, but never after obstruents, the choice of the allomorph depends on the place of articulation of the stem-final sonorant:

(2)

after nasals:

sol[de:riŋ]	<b>k</b> [jə]	welding
[be:zəm]	<b>p</b> [jə]	broom
[wa:xən]	<b>t</b> [jə]	car(t)

\* *VVŋ* (like in English)

[bo:m]	<b>p</b> [jə]	tree
[bo:n]	<b>t</b> [jə]	bean

after liquids:

[le:pəl]	<b>t</b> [jə]	spoon
[be:r]	<b>t</b> [jə]	bear

Secondly, there are syllable weight differences of two types, which determine the choice of the allomorph. On the one hand, some weight differences are sensitive to an obstruent–sonorant distinction in the last consonant of the stem:

(3)

short vowel followed by sonorant:

[kam]	ətjə	comb
[diŋ]	ətjə	thing
[pen]	ətjə	pen
[knaɪ]	ətjə	noise
[naɪ]	ətjə	fool

short vowel followed by obstruent:

[lap]	[jə]	cloth
[kat]	[jə]	cat
[blik]	[jə]	look
[das]	[jə]	necktie
[kif]	[jə]	quarrel
[bryx]	[jə]	bridge

On the other hand, weight differences are also sensitive to metrical restrictions:

(4)

	[bo:m]	p [jə]	tree
	[be:zəm]	p [jə]	broom
but	[kam]	ətjə	comb

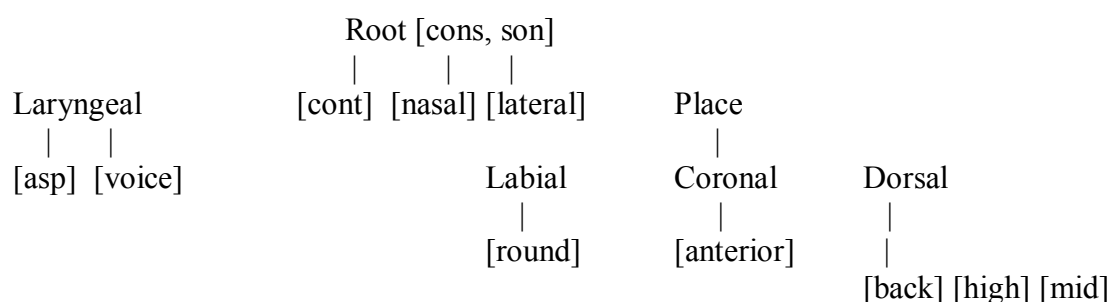
These latter distributions show that short-vowelled sonorant-final syllables count differently than short-vowelled obstruent-final syllables in determining the diminutive allomorph. This distinction is of prime importance here. Lastly, there is voicing restriction across the morpheme boundary, namely the homorganic stop is always voiceless.

## 2 Analysis (1): Booij (1995) on the diminutive suffix

Booij has a whole chapter devoted to Word Phonology in his excellent work on Dutch phonology. Here he discusses various allophonies and allomorphies both in the native and the non-native lexicon in Dutch. This chapter covers rules such as devoicing and voice assimilation, hiatus rules, degemination, vowel lengthenings, vowel-zero alternations, various deletion rules as well as root and affixal allomorphies. What is interesting, though, is that together with the similarly notorious *-er/-aar* allomorphy, Booij discusses in a separate section the diminutive as a *morpholexical rule* in Dutch, as distinct from all other allomorphies and alternations in the language. It is also noteworthy in this respect that a considerable number of the phenomena in this chapter involve admitted irregular alternations like irregular plurals and the like. In other words, there is absolutely no reason to think (and Booij does not claim that either) that all these phenomena are *per se* active or productive in the present day language. This observation lends additional support for the claim that some of the diminutive allomorphy (together with the now irrelevant *-er/-aar* allomorphy, of course) is in actual fact a relic phenomenon.

His approach to the diminutive allomorphy rests on standard assumptions in feature geometry (1995:9):

(5)



He gives the following summary of the regularities (1995:69):

(6)

- a, -je appears after stem-final obstruents
- b, -etje appears after sonorant consonants if preceded by a short vowel with primary or secondary stress
- c, -pje appears after /m/ except in the cases sub b
- d, -kje appears after /ŋ/ except in the cases sub b
- e, -tje appears elsewhere

His analysis then is formulated in terms of classical rule-ordering. Central to his approach is that the underlying morpheme is *//–tjə//* and an ordered set of various morphological rules are required to derive the other allomorphs:

(7)

- a, MP rules are used to derive the allomorphs from underlying */–tjə/*
- b, deletion of */t/* and
- c, insertion of homorganic stop in *–pje* and *–kje*
- d, insert a schwa: between a stressed rhyme sonorant and *–tje*

Booij then makes use of two sets of derivations. On the one hand, he analyses the allomorphs with epenthetic stop as a classical case of deletion followed by spreading (of the place feature). The other derivation has epenthesis of a vowel followed by deletion. Ordering is crucial with respect to schwa-insertion and t-deletion: (d) is ordered before (b). Compare the rule orderings below:

(8)

UR:	<i>səriŋ + -tjə</i>	but	<i>lamp + tjə</i>
b, Delete <i>/t/</i> :	<i>səriŋjə</i>		<i>lampjə</i>
c, Insert stop:	<i>səriŋkjə</i>		<i>n/a</i>
d, Insert ə:	<i>n/a</i>		<i>n/a</i>
SR:	<i>*səriŋkjə</i>		<i>lampjə</i>

UR:	<i>səriŋ + -tjə</i>	but	<i>lamp + tjə</i>
d, Insert ə:	<i>səriŋətjə</i>		<i>n/a</i>
b, Delete <i>/t/</i> :	<i>n/a</i>		<i>lampjə</i>
c, Insert stop:	<i>n/a</i>		<i>n/a</i>
SR:	<i>səriŋətjə</i>		<i>lampjə</i>

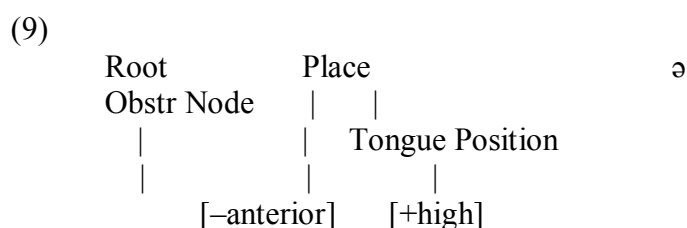
*sering* 'syringa' – *seringetje*

*lamp* 'lamp' – *lampje*

Notice that only the second ordering gives the correct SR. This derivation has a peculiar property, namely that it involves deletion and epenthesis of two sorts. Where epenthesis applies depends on whether a vocalic or consonantal segment is to be inserted. When a vowel is inserted, epenthesis precedes deletion, whereas when a consonant is inserted, it follows deletion. This is hardly a natural or regular situation cross-linguistically. Also, it is an observation in urgent need of explanation – but Booij does not give an explanation for this.

### 3 Analysis (2): Lahiri–Evers (1991) on the diminutive suffix

Their basic claim is that the underlying form is  $//\text{-tje}//$ , the first element of which is in fact underspecified for place but which has a secondary (palatal) place as well. They assume coronal underspecification here to account for a surface output like *lol – lolletje* as opposed to *kat–katje*, *\*kattje*, *lap–lapje*, *\*laptje*, *blik–blikje*, *\*blikkje* (cf (3) above). This underspecified morpheme (9), in their view, will then take on the place of articulation of the preceding labial or velar stop, accompanied of course by the specified secondary palatal place feature (Lahiri–Evers 1991:97). The Root Obstruent Node is empty, only  $/j/$  its Place features, followed by  $\emptyset$ :



Words will then have such representations:

(10)

		gloss
snob	$\text{sno}[\text{p}^j]\text{e}$	snob
lap	$\text{la}[\text{p}^j]\text{e}$	rag
hok	$\text{ho}[\text{k}^j]\text{e}$	cage
bed	$\text{be}[\text{t}^j]\text{e} / \text{be}[\text{tS}]\text{e} !$	bed
pot	$\text{po}[\text{t}^j]\text{e} / \text{po}[\text{tS}]\text{e} !$	pot

There is, however, a serious objection against such representations: in these examples there is simply no reason to assume a suffix-initial stop, either specified or underspecified. In their examples in (10) the alleged underspecified initial consonant of the suffix does not in fact take on the place of the preceding stop: the  $[\text{p} \text{ k}]$  of  $\text{sno}[\text{p}^j]\text{e}$  and  $\text{ho}[\text{k}^j]\text{e}$  is simply not part of the suffix, but part of the stem rather. Although in these cases one might argue that in Dutch there is obligatory degemination and that is why  $*\text{sno}[\text{pp}^j]\text{e}$  and  $*\text{ho}[\text{kk}^j]\text{e}$  are realised with a single stop. However, consider other degemination cases, like in the past forms of  $[\text{t}]$ -final verbs:

(11)

(ik) praat	$[\text{pra:t}]$	‘(I) speak’
(ik) pratte	$[\text{pra:t}\underline{\text{ə}}], *[\text{pra:t}\underline{\text{ə}}]$	‘(I) spoke’
= $/\text{praat}/ + /de/$		
$\langle \text{past} \rangle$		



In these forms, it is the suffix-initial stop that is deleted, rather than the stem-final consonant (otherwise the output would not be voiceless, but \*[pra:də], for instance). Why should the diminutive behave differently? Here too, it is the suffix-initial (underspecified) stop which is deleted – therefore, there is no spreading whatsoever. Why assume then still an underspecified stop there? The [t]-final stems provide additional evidence showing that there is no initial stop in the diminutive suffix. In these cases degemination could be easily avoided by automatic palatalization of the suffix-initial (!) stop to give \*bet.tSe. Notice that in these cases the spreading of the place of the stem-final coronal must precede degemination since that is how the initial stop receives its place. Also notice that palatalization would either precede degemination or follow it – but in either case it is a single palatal(ized) consonant which surfaces. In other words, it simply makes no difference whether an underspecified stop is assumed in the suffix or not: the diminutive forms have a single consonant on the surface anyway. Well then, if one cannot use that alleged stop for anything, then why should it be assumed to be there? Recall Occam's Razor.

#### 4 Problems posed by the data and problems of the analyses

A number of objections can be raised against the above analyses. This section reviews three sets of objections.

The first set of objections is that these approaches try to derive the allomorphy from a palatalized coronal /t/ with delinking and spreading to obtain the allomorphs. The major problem here is that the delinking–spreading is applicable only in a subset of diminutive forms to begin with, namely those in (4) above since only in those cases is place assimilation to be assumed. Moreover, unless degemination applies (cf (11) above), delinking of /t/ does not happen either in the past tense formation or in lexical items (examples from van de Weijer 2002:201):

- (12)
- |              |           |            |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| pas – paste, | *pas_e    | 'fit-Past' |
| woestijn,    | *woes_ijn | 'desert'   |

Furthermore, such delinking and spreading would apply exclusively to the diminutive suffix. Consider the distributive *ge-...-te* circumfix (from van de Weijer 2002:203):

(13)

boom 'tree'	– geboomte, *geboompte, *geboompe 'foliage'
raam 'window'	– geraamte, *geraamppte, *geraampe 'skeleton, frame'

The approach to derive the allomorphs from an underlying /t/ is also accompanied by an essentially epenthetic treatment of the allomorphy. The diminutive allomorphy makes use of two sorts of epenthesis: either schwa or a homorganic stop is inserted. The problem is simply that neither of these epentheses is needed. In Dutch such stop epenthesis is only applicable to this particular morpheme. This is unwanted. The epenthesis of a schwa is a different matter. While it does not exclusively apply to the diminutive, it applies in the derivational morphology to be sure, but not elsewhere (from van de Weijer 2002:201, 207):

(14)

*kan* – \**kantje*, *kann*□*tje*  
*kenn*□*lijk* 'apparently' – *begeerlijk*, \**begeer*□*lijk* 'delectable'  
*Kantijl* <a name> \**Kan*□*tijl*

There is a further objection, however. Although diachronic observations can be argued to have no role to play in a synchronic description, yet historical and comparative evidence might help in clarifying certain points in the description or at least to lend more credibility (not 'proof', of course!) to one approach over another. Such seems to be the case here. Assuming an underlying /t/ overlooks the historical fact that the morpheme is etymologically related to the German suffix *-chen*, and the Flemish *-ke(n)*: there has thus never been a /t/ in the morpheme in the first place (it is the spelling which traps one into assuming a /t/ here!; more on this is Section 5). The present-day form of the diminutive is the result of a Hollands change, also seen in a personal pronoun and sporadically in other words, too. The process turned velars into glides:

(15)

Dutch *jij* – Flemish *ghij*      you  
 Du *spuwen* = *spugen* spit, spew  
 Du *ei* – cf English *egg*

The second major objection is that the above approaches overlook the generalization that the *-je* allomorph surfaces after obstruents which are either the final consonant of the stem or one of the epenthetic stops /p k/, irrespectively of the length of the preceding syllable. The allomorph with the palatalized consonant in the suffix surfaces in voiced environments (after sonorants and vowels, that is), not irrespectively of certain metrical considerations. Compare:

(16)

lapje	aapje	bezempje
katje	gaatje	wagentje
blikje	kijkje	solderinkje
	zeetje	
mannetje	maantje	
kammetje		
jongetje		
lolletje	paaltje	
narretje	uurtje	

In essence then, this is an allomorphy of two allomorphs only: -je after voiceless obstruents (both stops and fricatives) and -tje after voiced sonorants (including vowels of course). This is a much more natural distribution than that presented in (1) above. It also has the advantage that it can be captured rather simply. The suffix itself is always realized as voiceless, and it is either a simple /j/ or a strengthened /c/. And that is the allomorphy really (but see Section 5 below for details).

The third objection has to do with the derivation itself. To begin with, when concatenating the suffix, either a schwa or a homorganic stop is inserted (see (7-8) above), but the insertion applies at different places in the derivation. As was already pointed out earlier, this set of derivational possibilities is hardly a natural living process, some of it is better captured as lexicalization. Above it was demonstrated that only one of the epentheses, the insertion of schwa, is phonologically active. Furthermore, there is no reason to assume an underlying /t/ in the morpheme because it would cause problems in the derivation. There is no reason to assume any intermediate step yielding unattested forms, whereas rule-ordering would have exactly such intermediate steps:

(17)

stam + je	→	stammetje		
stam + je	→	*stammet + je	→	stammetje
or	→	*stam + tje	→	*stamme + tje → stammetje

This is the worst kind of problem for theories where derivation and rule ordering (or phonological cycles) have their say. However, it is more than interesting to point out that an analysis of the derivation in the form:

(18)

stam → stam[ə] → stam[ə] + [jə] → stam[ətjə]

is not problematic at all. For one thing, the form *stam*/[ $\square$ ] does appear as an allomorph of *stam*, namely in the plural form (spelt <stammen>). In other words, a derivation making reference to an intermediate *stam*/[ $\square$ ] form has the advantage of referring to an attested allomorph. The twist in the story is this: when the stem is metrically 'too short' (inappropriate) for the suffix, the diminutive takes the metrically appropriate and, crucially, already existing allomorph of the stem (the plural allomorph), and it attaches to that. It must be pointed out that the plural allomorph is plural in form only, but not in meaning: No claim is made here that in such diminutive forms there is semantically something plural. These considerations result then in alternations of the following sort for stems like *aap* 'ape', *lamp* 'lamp', *kam* 'comb' and *anecdote* 'anecdote':

non-diminutive		diminutive		gloss
singular	plural	singular	plural	
a:p	<b>a:pə</b>	<b>a:pjə</b>	a:pjəs	
<aap>	<apen>	<aapje>	<aapjes>	'ape'
lamp	<b>lampə</b>	<b>lampjə</b>	lampjəs	
<lamp>	<lampen>	<lampje>	<lampjes>	'lamp'
anəkdo:tə	<b>anəkdo:təs</b>	<b>anəkdo:tətjə</b>	anəkdo:tətjəs	
<anecdote>	<anecdotes>	<anecdoteje>	<anecdotejes>	'anecdote'
kam	<b>kamə</b>	<b>kamətjə</b>	kamətjəs	
<kam>	<kammen>	<kammetje>	<kammetjes>	'comb'

Notice that in the last noun, the diminutive incorporates the plural allomorph in its entirety, and also that in all the other three nouns, the diminutive is formed on the singular allomorph. This approach needs some evidence, nevertheless. Additional support for the claim that the (formally) plural allomorph underlies the *stam*, *kam* – *stammetje*, *kammetje* alternations comes from 'irregular' diminutive forms like: *d*[a:]*g*–*d*[a:]*gje* 'day', *pad*–*p*[a:]*dje* 'path', *schip*–*scheepje* 'ship'. Interestingly enough, these nouns have the following plural forms: *d*[a:]*gen*, *p*[a:]*den*, *sch*[e:]*pen* (all examples from Booij, 1995:72). Anyone familiar with historical changes in Dutch may immediately object that these 'lengthened plurals' are the result of synchronically regular open syllable lengthenings in Middle Dutch effecting all sorts

of alternation throughout the verbal, nominal as well as adjectival morphology, inflectional as well as derivational, and, therefore, that it is not fair to cite these words for the diminutive since the process is not productive any longer and these are relic forms in fact. There is, however, an important observation here. As is clear, there used to be an active phonological interdependence between plural and diminutive formation: open syllable lengthening. Although the motivation for just that particular interdependence is no longer warranted, the interaction itself seems to survive: namely the regular diminutive form of metrically short stems uses the (regular) plural allomorph of the stem! In the present-day system, there is nothing irregular about the forms in question. In other words, the connection between plural and diminutive survives in spirit intact, only the substance of that relation has since changed. What all this means for the presentation here is that the allomorphy of metrically short stems is not in fact the insertion of a schwa, but the choice of the plural allomorph of the stem. Obviously the claim is not the plural form is taken for its plurality; the form is taken because it happens to be metrically 'OK' for the purposes of diminutive suffixation. (This also works for the other similar alternations as far as I can see, but this is not the time and place to go into the details.) All that has to be still explained is why the /j/ in the suffix strengthens. This is discussed in the next section.

## 5 The alternative claim

is that it is [jə] which underlies the allomorphy and it turns into „something palatal” whenever it is intervocalic or after sonorants. Above, it was already alluded to that the forms with stop epenthesis are not to be regarded as synchronically derived forms, but rather as fossilized or lexicalized forms. Most importantly, it is apparent that there are no syllabic or metrical gains to having *boompje* to, say, *boomje* or *\*boomtje* or *\*bometje*: the homorganic stop is not needed to obtain a well-formed diminutive noun. What seems to defy analysis is why neither of the allomorphs of the stem, that is: [bo:m] and [bo:mə], can be the base for the diminutive formation and why this problem does not emerge at all for obstruent-final bases, where the singular allomorph is readily available. The only, slightly circular, explanation could be that in Dutch sonorants after short vowels do not count the same for metrical purposes as obstruents do. While these cases are then either considered relics or are left here unaccounted for, the regular and phonologically conditioned cases are much more straightforward. The diminutive attaches to a metrically appropriate base, either the singular or the plural

allomorph of the stem. And there is allomorphy only between two forms of the suffix: a simple [jə] on the one hand after obstruents and [tjə] / [cə] on the other hand in the other environments. The major aim of this section is to enumerate arguments why it is the specified rather than the elsewhere allomorph which is assumed in this paper to underlie the allomorphy. It has to be admitted, though, that the contrary claim assuming [tjə] or rather [cə] underlyingly is indeed feasible (and would be dictated by the elsewhere consideration), but then the case must be made for the phonemic status of [c]. Well, although this could be done, Dutch specialists seem to be frightened of such a step. Anyway, it is only the claim which assumes /t/ underlyingly that is under debate in this paper, and the question whether [jə] is assumed or not is secondary. Below, it will be argued what merits it has if one assumes [jə].

Arguments for the claim come from various directions, intralinguistic as well comparative considerations. The most important observation to make is that the two allomorphs are not completely unrelated, they are primarily phonologically different: a weak and a strengthened palatal segment alternate. And this distribution has to be explained. Luckily, the key to the distribution is rather simple: the palatal has its strengthened form after sonorants but remains a simple palatal glide after obstruents.

First of all, there are three sorts of stems with the *-tje* allomorph where these are actually unexpected to appear. These cases are significant because they show more of the nature of the distributions. On the one hand, some stems that have a stop-epenthetic allomorph have a twin with the *-tje* allomorph as well:

- (20)
- |       |                      |        |
|-------|----------------------|--------|
| bloem | bloempje / bloemetje | flower |
|-------|----------------------|--------|

These stems then behave as if they were of the *kam*-type, and they do not take the *-je* allomorph since no obstruent precedes the suffix. On the other hand, there are indeed some obstruent-final short-vowelled stems that take either of the regular allomorphs (examples from van de Weijer 2002:201, 207):

(21)

big	bigje / biggetje	piglet
brug	brugje / bruggetje	bridge
eg	egje / eggetje	harrow
heg	hegje / heggetje	hedge
rog	rogje / roggetje	ray (fish)
rug	rugje / ruggetje	back, spine
vlag	vlagje / vlaggetje	flag
weg	weje / weggetje	road
kip	kippetje	chicken
krab	krabje / krabbetje	crab
pop	poppetje / popje	puppet

Perhaps not too surprisingly, these stems all end in non-coronals, velars or labials. Actually, these data show these stems to be similar to short-vowelled sonorant-final stems like *kam* and *stam*. What this suggests is beyond the scope of this paper since it would lead us far afield. It has also to be added that sometimes there is a difference in the meaning of the two diminutive forms, but this differentiation is just to be expected with diminutives anyway. (Worse, the *-tje* form is usually comparably later than the epenthetic one.) Furthermore, there is a third set of stems where only the *-tje* form is possible:

(22)

léerling	léerlingetje / *leerlinkje	student
jóngeling	jóngelingetje / *jongelinkje	young boy, child
tékening	tékeningetje	drawing

This latter set is hard to capture if assimilation processes (with stop epenthesis) score high in the account of the allomorphy. In addition, the stems are long enough for occasional relic assimilations to emerge. But none – see the \* forms. One might suggest that the base in these words is morphologically complex already, so that morphological cooccurrence restrictions are involved, since both *-ing* and *-ling* are suffixes. This would leave *soldering* – *solderinkje* unexplained, though. What is noteworthy in the *-ing* bases is the difference in the place of the stress: *tékening* versus *soldéring*. In the latter, but not in the former is relic place assimilation possible.

Another argument for the underlying [jə] form comes from palatalization facts. Similar palatalizations occur (albeit sporadically) elsewhere in Dutch. Consider the following sample:

(23)

		gloss
jonge	tjonge, tjonge or tjonge, jonge sjonge, jonge	guy
ja	tja	yes
jee	thee	exclamation of surprise
tjokvol	< English <i>chock-full</i>	chock-full
tjiftjaf	cf English <i>chiffchaff</i>	chiffchaff
tjilpen		chirp (of birds)
tjingelen	tingelen	tingle

A number of other Malay, Chinese or Frisian words include *tjalk* <a type of ship>, *tjasker* <a type of mill>, *tjotter* <a type of yacht> (from Frisian); *atjar tjampoer* <a mixture of pickles; cf Indonesian *campur* 'mixture'>, *tjitjak* (from Malay); *tjap tjoy* <a type of dish> (from Cantonese Chinese). It is also to be noted that in the respective donor languages these words include a voiceless palatal affricate. It could be said then that Dutch has as its most complex palatal sound a /c/-like segment, but not a /tS/.

For comparative evidence, note especially that similar phenomena are not unattested in Romance languages either. Consider the following changes of Latin #/ja ju/ in various Romance languages:

(24)

L IAM 'already'	> Spanish ya [ja], but Galician xa [Sa], Italian gia [dZa]
L IACERE 'to lie'	> Spanish yacer [ja-], but Galician xacer [S-], Italian
L IANUARIU 'January'	> Ga xaneiro [S], Italian gennaio [dZ-]
L IUNCTARE 'to join'	> Sp juntar [x-], Ga xuntar [S-], Italian [dZ-]
L IUSTU 'right'	> Sp justo [x-], Ga xusto, Italian giusto

It has to be noted that the changes are insensitive to the place of the stress. Also, the Spanish reflexes show occasional /j/ in stead of the expected /x/.

In addition, there is a phonotactic argument for [jə]. There is a general restriction in Dutch banning a sequence of a stressed vowel followed by at least one consonant and two unstressed schwas separated by yod:

(25)

$$*V \ C \ ə \ j \ ə$$

[+stress]

Obviously, the proposal that it is actually a single yod that underlies the active allomorphic alternation faces the objections why then Dutch spells some of the allomorphs with <t> rather than something else, and why it indicates the epenthetic stops in the relic allomorphs. A brief and admittedly tentative note on orthography follows now. Consider the



active process first. First of all, the whole problem is driven by the orthographic belief that whatever is spelt a <t> is pronounced a [t]. This belief has been so strong in fact that even linguists believed that it is the case in Dutch that an orthographic <t> can be assumed in the underlying representation of those lexemes that have it in the spelling. I have tried to show above this latter belief not to hold. Secondly, Dutch in such cases does in fact very effectively indicate that there is some palatal there since <tj> is found in the spelling just like in the case of psychologically more real palatals like *tjalk*. As for the relic spellings, it may not be too far-fetched to say that in these cases a spelling of earlier intrusive stops have remained in vogue, so to speak. It is very likely that earlier the intrusive stops present in *raampje* are exactly of the kind one used to find in spellings like <Ampsterdam>. In the latter cases, later spelling, although I am not quite sure whether pronunciation as well, has undergone an elimination of intrusive sounds. The diminutive, however, escaped this orthographic purification for some reason.

Returning briefly to the discussion of the phonemic status of /c/ in Dutch earlier in this section, a number of observations can be brought up in support of that view. If a phonemic /c/ is assumed to underlie the allomorphy, then no intervocalic strengthening has to be assumed and the whole process reduces to post-consonantal weakening (eg in *lap-lapje*) – a much more frequent phenomenon. It could be said that /c/ is a phoneme, albeit somewhat less frequent, since it creates minimal pairs (cf *tjalk* – *kalk*), and it has an allophone /j/ after obstruents! In addition, the historical emergence of Dutch /c/ would be the perfectly regular change \*k<sup>j</sup> -> t<sup>j</sup> / c. And I would not mind that solution either after all.

## Summary

This article discussed issues related to the notorious problem of the Dutch diminutive allomorphy. The major claim here is that the various allomorphs do not derive from a form containing /t/ in its lexical representation. It first presented the primary facts. It was pointed out in particular that the place of the word stress and metrical conditions have an important role to play in the allomorphy. Also, it was made clear that the forms with stop epenthesis are to be regarded as relic forms. Next, the paper presented two accounts of the diminutive allomorphy in detail. Booij's analysis derived the correct outputs, but it failed to give a reason for there being two separate insertion rules, one of them, the stop insertion rule, being exclusively applicable to this morpheme. Lahiri and Evers' account was objected on the

grounds that it assumes an empty Root Obstruent Node in the underlying representation of the morpheme, which was shown to be unnecessary – there is in fact no such node in the morpheme. The morpheme contains a single C and a single V slot in its lexical representation.

A number of objections were raised against these approaches. It was argued that assuming /t/ in the suffix overlooks both synchronic and diachronic phonological considerations. In connection with some derivational problems, it was shown that it is possible to consider the metrically sensitive allomorphy to be an allomorphy of the stem rather than the suffix itself. It was claimed that metrically inappropriate stems figure in their plural allomorph before the diminutive suffix. This solution is also found elsewhere in the language so it is not as stipulative as it seems at first sight. This means in effect that no epenthesis applies in this allomorphy at all. The last section presented arguments in favour of the claim that there is /j/ in the underlying representation. The most important observation is that there are in Dutch forms with a palatal affricate /c/ which either show alternation with /j/ in Dutch or contain /c/ because they are borrowed with /c/. Moreover, there is nothing strange in such strengthenings cross-linguistically either. One of the interesting features that needs further investigation is whether it would better capture other aspects of the phonology of Dutch, not only the diminutive, if /c/ was assumed in the phoneme inventory of Dutch. But either way, the diminutive does not contain an underlying /t/, but a palatal segment.

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